Project Closeout Report

Presented to the IT Committee October 10, 2005

Project Name: LARS

Agency: Legislative Council

Business Unit/Program Area:

Project Sponsor: Jason Steckler, Information Technology Director

Project Manager: Sonja Olson

	Measurements	
Project Objectives	Met/ Not Met	Description
Replace the existing legislative applications with an automated system.	Not Met	There was no system implemented. Vendor terminated contract.

Schedule Objectives			
Met/ Not Met	Scheduled Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Variance
Not Met	Project Cancelled	Project Cancelled	NA

Budget Objectives			
Met/ Not Met	Baseline Budget	Actual Expenditures	Variance
Not Met	$4,648,224	$2,428,848	48% - Project Cancelled Due to Vendor Termination

Major Scope Changes
None

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned:

The lessons learned were broken into two factors: Human and Technical. Following were our lessons learned on the project:

Human Factors

- Objectives and requirements must be clearly defined and measurable.
- Active project management of the project plan methodology and processes must be used consistently throughout the project. There were often ineffective meetings led by the vendor, no agenda and no minutes so that continuity in decision-making could continue from meeting-to-meeting.
- Project managers must ensure that the status they report is accurate, measured constantly, and analyzed appropriately. In this case, the initial NDLC project manager used the metrics provided by the vendor to report to the project sponsor. This information was not verified and was open to interpretation and analysis. Ultimately trends that should have been warnings were not visible until much later in the project than expected.
- The initial warning signs of vendor difficulty were ignored. Example: There was a gradual escalation of late deliverables starting in after the contract was signed. After two quarters of increasingly later and fewer deliverables, (20 deliverables were expected, 16 were delivered, 5 were delivered on time, 5 were accepted) the problem was brought to the Executive Steering Committee, which allowed the vendor to re-plan. The new plan used a completely different method of 'bundling' the deliverables. It could not logically be compared to the initial plan and it was more difficult to track continuing and escalating vendor difficulties with the project. ITD recommended that the technical architecture deliverable be

scheduled earlier in the project because of its high risk and because it was on the critical path. This message was not acted on even though ITD was a member of the executive steering group. During the next two quarters the deliverables followed the same trend. They were increasingly late and when they were delivered were of poor quality. During Q1 2008: 10 deliverables were expected, 1 was delivered (on time), 1 was accepted. During Q2 2008: 13 deliverables were expected, 1 was delivered (late), 0 were accepted, and the vendor proposed design failure initiated re-planning. They were again afforded the ability to re-plan. When PTC could not produce a new plan, they withdrew from the project. By this time it was Q4 of 2008. This was 15 months after the contract for Phase 2 of the project was signed.

- Important decisions must be documented and communicated to all stakeholders. A formal approval process for design documents, baselines, change requests and issues was not followed. There were changes in scope that would be delivered but it was not documented through change management. Example:
    - The requirements in the RFP states, “Replacement of existing systems” with a bullet for “website”.
    - The SOW (S3:M5 Replace Public Web Site) stated “Replacing the public web site was outside the scope of this project.” and “While not responsible for the web site design (UI, frames, organization and structure), PTC will be responsible for the programmatic posts and redirects required by the applications within the scope of this project.” There is no decrease in scope documentation and the costs and schedule remained the same as the RFP response.
    - In later conversations, as discussed between the NDLC and vendor project managers, the outputs to the website were moved beyond the initial project implementation date to a project that would occur during the support period (which was not in the initial contract). From an Issues Log dated February 01, 2008: “Jim Gienger reported that for the next session the Legislative Branch has decided they will not redesign and replace the current web site. This means that PTC will work with NDLC and ITD to ensure that PTC knows where and how to post the data being generated from the new environment. Change the website dramatically. The redesign of the website being deferred will not affect plans for the new subscription service.”
- None of these changes were documented in status reports given to the executive steering committee or had a paper trail.
- Ensure there is a defined risk management plan that is actively managed. If there isn’t a risk management log, it is impossible to mitigate risks as they occurred because they were never identified. Example: Project staffing should be monitored as a risk to ensure project success. This did not occur. High turnover of project managers (four throughout the project) by the vendor should have been monitored, tracked, and documented. A mitigation strategy should have been in place to make sure schedule was not impacted. This was not the case and NDLC felt they had to technically re-train each project manager which caused delays and team rebuilding.
- Make sure roles and responsibilities of the vendor, ITD, and NDLC are accurately defined and understood.
- Team members must have the correct skill-sets. Lack of specific technical expertise from the vendor creates high-risk. PTC , which acquired ArborText after the initial RFP, had limited legislative experience and did not hire any legislative consultants. Therefore, the NDLC staff spent much time training the PTC staff on what the business of the NDLC was rather than on the technical design of the project.
- Allow end-users to make business decisions, rather than technical staff. This will ensure that the product meets the needs of the business.
- There needs to be a clear escalation path and project authority.

Technical Factors

- Define realistic project goals. A vendor's underestimating of the complexity of large scale IT projects leads to unrealistic expectations and timelines.
- Have quality and acceptance criteria clearly defined.
- If there is new technology used, it should be considered high-risk. There were tools that had not been used for this type of application suggested by the vendor. This resulted in re-work and re-design very late in the project, when the technology didn’t work as anticipated.
- Ensure there are measurable and periodic progress reviews.

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Success Story
NA – Project Terminated